



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240329

Location: Communication Station Adj Inn On The Lake Watling Street Shorne
Gravesend

Description: Works to antennas on existing tower including; Removal of 1no. dish antenna at 31.5m high, replaced with 1no. dish at 33.5m high and Relocation of 2no. dishes at 31.5m high to 29m high. Installation of 2no. ODU's (ancillary equipment).

Applicant: Cellnex

Site Visit Date: 19/04/24

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form

Cover Letter

1490517-00-004-ML004 Rev 4 – Location Plan

1490517-00-000-MD020 Rev 20 – Site Plan Existing

1490517-32-100-MD019 Rev 19 – Site Plan Proposed

1490517-00-002-MD020 Rev 20 – Elevation Existing North East

1490517-32-150-MD019 Rev 19 – Elevation Proposed

1490517-32-151-MD018 Rev 18A – Antenna Plan Proposed

1490517-32-152-MD018 Rev 18A – Antenna Elevation Detail Proposed

Cover Letter

ICNIRP Document

Superseded:

~~1490517-32-150-MD019 Rev 19 – Elevation Proposed~~

~~1490517-32-151-MD018 Rev 18A – Antenna Plan Proposed~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20170055	The installation of two 1.0m diameter transmission dishes on the existing 35m high mast.	Permitted	08/03/2017
20160653	Installation of a 1.8 m diameter transmission dish and three 1.2 m diameter transmission dishes on the existing 35m high mast.	Permitted	26/09/2016
20000468	Application for variation of condition 2 of planning permission ref. No. GR/98/631 to allow for the erection of 2 no. dual polar antennas and 2 no. dish antennas onto existing mast and erection of radio equipment cabin.	Permitted	27/09/2000

19980631	Replacement of existing 30m high tower with one 35m high tower, complete with three dual polar antennas, twelve sector antennas, eight dish antennas and associated radio equipment housings	Prior Approval Not Required	04/12/1998
19970812	Application for the variation of condition (iv) of planning permission ref. no. GR/91/296 relating to the erection of an extension on the north elevation, to allow remedial works to the eastern end of the lake.	Permitted	12/01/1998
19920737	Erection of a 30m high steel lattice radio mast.	Permitted	30/03/1993

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS13 – Green Space, Sport and Recreation
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Ward Councillors

No comments received.

Shorne Parish Council

No comments received.

Neighbouring properties

1 surrounding properties was consulted and no comments were received from members of the public.

Officer's Analysis

Principal Issues:

- Sustainability
- Green Belt
- Design and Character of the Area
- Kent Down National Landscape
- Amenity

Sustainability

The NPPF (2023), indicates that the communication infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social wellbeing;

118. Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution).

In this section the legislation continues, advising that the use of existing masts, or other structures should be encouraged where possible rather than creation of new telecommunication sites;

119. The number of radio and electronic communications masts, and the sites for such installations, should be kept to a minimum consistent with the needs of consumers, the efficient operation of the network and providing reasonable capacity for future expansion. Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged. Where new sites are required (such as for new 5G networks, or for connected transport and smart city applications), equipment should be sympathetically designed and camouflaged where appropriate.

It also advises that;

122. Local planning authorities must determine applications on planning grounds only. They should not seek to prevent competition between different operators, question the need for an electronic communications system, or set health safeguards different from the International Commission guidelines for public exposure.

The proposal to maintain and enhance the telecommunications provision on this existing mast would therefore meet 2 of the 3 overarching objectives of the planning system, in its goal of achieving sustainable development (Paragraph 8 of the NPPF, 2023). The social and economic objectives would be met. Assessment therefore needs to be made as to whether the proposal would meet the remaining, environmental objective. Redevelopment of this existing site would also be the preferred option over creation of a new site.

Green Belt

Being located within the Green Belt, strict planning policies apply to protect the openness of the land which, as stated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is an essential characteristic of such areas. To protect the openness and prevent urban sprawl into such areas, government planning guidance states that “inappropriate development” should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This national policy stance is reflected in saved Policy C13 of the Local Plan First Review, and includes most forms of new development.

Paragraph 152 of the NPPF (2023) explains that “inappropriate” development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 then explains that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt will be “inappropriate”, subject to a list of exceptions. This type of development is not included in the list of exceptions and is therefore considered inappropriate.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF (2023) states;

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When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In this case, the scale of the proposal is very minimal (even more so than previously permitted proposal 20160653 and similar to 20170055) and as the majority of the structure is in existence, the alterations proposed would not cause any further harm to the Green Belt.

Paragraph 118 states:

‘Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.’

Paragraph 119 states:

‘Use of existing masts, buildings and other structures for new electronic communications capability (including wireless) should be encouraged.’

On balance, it is therefore considered that the proposed scheme would result in limited harm to the Green Belt and the benefits of the expansion of electronic communication networks and use of the existing mast, would be an exceptional circumstance which would outweigh the limited harm to the green belt in accordance with paragraphs 118, 119 and 153 of the NPP (2023).

Design and Character of the Area

The proposed site is to the east of the Inn on the Lake and to the North of the A2. The site is not a visually attractive area, and the existing mast is a fairly prominent feature.

The existing mast is highly visible from the Inn on the Lake Car park as per the below image.



Taken on site on 29th March

There are also some longer views of the mast from the west as per the following image:



Taken on site on 29th March

However, there is a line of trees to the south which somewhat restricts visibility from both the pedestrian route and A2 road.



Taken on site on 29th March

As viewed during the site visit, whilst the mast given its height has some prominence from certain viewpoints, it is somewhat obscured from the south. Given the high level of visibility this feeds into the assessment of the proposed changes and the wider impact the changes would have on the local character. The works to the existing mast would include; Relocation/replacement of 3no. dishes and installation of 3no. ODU's. This would not result in significant impact on the character of the area given the minor nature of the works.

Kent Downs National Landscape

The application site is situated within the Kent Downs National Landscape (Formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Part of the nationally important landscape of the Kent Downs National Landscape is located on the eastern side of the Borough and it extends from Shorne south to Vigo. It is designated because of its scarp slope and dry valleys which often retain a down land character and its woodlands are also highly valued. The views from the escarpment are also important. It is considered that great weight should be given to protecting the landscape and the National Landscape. The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan has been adopted by the Council. It sets out a clear vision, aims and policies for the conservation, management and enhancement of the National Landscape.

The site is located in the Kent Downs National Landscape and as such, it is necessary to consider the relevant policies.

SD1: The need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape is recognised as the primary purpose of the designation and given the highest level of protection within statutory and other appropriate planning and development strategies and development control decisions.

SD2: The local character, qualities and distinctiveness of the Kent Downs National Landscape will be conserved and enhanced in the design, scale, setting and materials of new development, redevelopment and infrastructure and will be pursued through the application of appropriate design guidance and position statements which are adopted as components of the AONB Management Plan.

SD3: New development or changes to land use will be opposed where they disregard or run counter to the primary purpose of the Kent Downs National Landscape.

SD8: Proposals which negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the National Landscape will be opposed unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

It is considered that there is no conflict between the Kent Downs National Landscape and the proposed scheme subject to suitable conditions.

On balance, the proposed development would comply with the requirements of Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2023) in terms of the impact on the National Landscape, design, character and appearance.

Amenity

Paragraph 121(a) of the NPPF (2023), requires that the application be supported by the outcome of consultations with organisations with an interest in the proposed development, in particular with the relevant body where a mast is to be installed near a school or college, or within a statutory safeguarding zone surrounding an aerodrome, technical site or military explosives storage area. In this instance, the site is not near a school or college, or within any other the other consultation areas as described in this paragraph. Therefore, no consultation was necessary with these bodies.

As per paragraph 121(b) of the NPPF (2023), the applicant have submitted a ICNIRP Document which self-certifies that the cumulative exposure, when operational, will not exceed International Commission guidelines on non-ionising radiation protection.

The proposed scheme would result in minor alterations to the dishes on the existing mast which would result in no greater number than existing. The impact on the adjoining inn is likely to be minimum given the minor nature of the proposed works.

The proposal is therefore considered to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties in compliance with policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed development complies with all relevant national and local planning policies. The recommendation is to approve.

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Lisa Fisher	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	3rd June 2024	Dated:	10th June 2024